Panther Prints

The Official Newsletter of The Friends of The Eastern Panther

Friends of
The Eastern Panther
P.O. Box 102
Exeter, NH 03833
(603) 772-2178
(603) 778-9685

Volume 1 No. 2

Spring1991

FOTEP Sponsors Major Road Show

From January 29th until February 9th FOTEP members Jay Tischendorf and Ted Reed toured New Brunswick, Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, conducting a series of nine seminars and meetings focussing on the present and future status of the Eastern Panther in the regions visited. Three seminars were geared specifically to the interests of wildlife biologists, and six meetings were held to inform and help educate the general public. A total of six hundred people attended, a quite remarkable number when it is considered that three of the meetings were strictly limited to biologists and other wildlife professionals. The six public meetings had an average attendance of ninety, with a high of almost two hundred in Fredericton, N.B., and a low of forty in Manchester, NH.

Jay Tischendorf was the principal speaker at all the sessions and deservedly received many compliments on both the substance and delivery of his talks. His talks to biologists was entitled "Tracking the Panther" and here Jay drew on his years of experience in several western states with special emphasis on his work in Yellowstone National Park. Jay showed numerous photographs of Western Cougar tracks, as well as line drawings. He spoke extensively on the difficulty of distinguishing cougar tracks from those of dogs, bob cats, lynx, bears, wolverines, wolves, and even showshoe hares. He also discussed other cougar signs such as scrapes, scats, and claw marks, as well as deer-kills. Each seminar was followed by a lengthy question and answer period. In these informal periods the extent and depth of Jay's knowledge was equally visible.

In the public meetings Jay's presentation was organized around his outstanding slides of the cougar project in Yellowstone. Jay and his partner, Kerry Murphy, logged many miles in the course of this project. The slides give a vivid picture not only of cougars, but of what it is like in this great wilderness in the winter, for the two men by themselves depending on their own skills and the skills of their dogs. The public meetings were entitled "Saving the Eastern Panther".

One of the great results of this series of meetings was the opportunity to talk with many life- long and highly knowledgeable outdoorsmen who had had personal encounters with the Eastern Panther. For example, at the St. Stephen, N.B. meeting we met a man in his forties whom we judged to be reliable, who told us that he had seen five panthers in his lifetime. Two were seen in the general vicinity of St. Martin's N.B. and the other three in Charlotte County, N.B.

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At the Woodstock, N.B. meeting, almost 25%

The International Society of Cryptozoology

FOTEP members and other readers of "Panther Prints" may be interested to learn that there is another organization with similar interests and purposes to ours. The International Society of Cryptozoology, P.O. Box 43070, Tucson, Arizona 85733, provides a forum for those of us curious about such wildlife mysteries as the eastern panther, Loch Ness monster, Champie, pygmy elephant, coelacanth, ivory-billed woodpecker, Tasmanian wolf, and many other creatures undiscovered or presumed extinct.

Founded in the early 1980s, the ISC fills an important but often overlooked and ridiculed niche of science, the study of cryptids - organisms out of place in time or place. Though many members are professional biologists, anthropologists, or archealogists, many more are simply persons fascinated by the unknown, the unexplained, and the countless mysteries of the natural world.

Catering to this diverse group of cryptozoological enthusiasts, the ISC publishes 4 easy-reading and wonderfully informative newsletters, plus a single more scientific journal each year. FOTEP fans should note that a recent issue of the newsletter, in a well-written tribute to Bruce Wright by ISC secretariat Richard Greenwell, featured an 8 page article on the eastern panther. One of the most up-to-date panther accounts in recent history, this issue, like most other ISC back issues, is still available for $3. Individual dues are $30 annually.

FOTEP Road Show *(continued from page 1)*

At the Woodstock, N.B. meeting, almost 25% of the people attending stated that they had seen an Eastern Panther in the wild. As an indication of the great public interest in the panther, some people who attended the Woodstock meeting made round trip drives of 150 miles on one of the worst nights of the winter - winds of 30 to 35 miles per hour, blowing snow affecting visibility, and with wind-chill factors in the -35°F range. At the meeting in Durham, NH we had a man from Manchester tell us of a panther he saw within the city limits of Manchester. This man is a photographer, and we believe him to be a reliable witness. His story was related in great detail and had obviously made a profound effect on him.

A summary of this tour follows:

Date	Place	Type of Meeting	Attendance	Time
Jan. 30th	Fredericton, N.B.	Biologists Only	22	10:00 am - 3:00 pm
Jan. 30th	Fredericton, N.B.	Public	194	7:30 pm - 10:30 pm
Jan. 31st	Woodstock, N.B.	Public	66	7:30 pm - 10:30 pm
Feb. 1st	St. Stephen, N.B.	Public	58	7:30 pm - 10:30 pm
Feb. 4th	Orono, ME	Public (U of ME)	52	12:00 noon - 1:30 pm
Feb 4th	Bangor, ME	Biologists Only	15	3:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Feb. 5th	Durham, NH	Public	86	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm
Feb. 7th	Manchester, NH (St. Anselm's College)	Student	44	10:00 - 11:30 am
Feb. 8th	Westboro, MA	Biologists Only	16	2:00 pm - 4:30 pm

FOTEP would like to acknowledge the invaluable help of the following people, without whom the success of these meetings would have been impossible:

Fredericton Meetings - Rob & Leslie Rainer of the Humane Society of New Brunswick (organizers) Adrien Charette of Edmonston, N.B.

Woodstock Meeting - Pat Provencher (organizer) - Adrien Charette

St. Stephen Meeting - Tom Moffat (organizer) Carol Ann Nicholson (publicity)

Orono, ME - Bruce Lauber (organizer)

Bangor, ME - George Matula (organizer)

Durham, NH - Howard Nowell and Eric Orff (organizers)

Manchester, NH - Don Rhodes (organizer)

Westboro, MA - Steve Williams (organizer)

FOTEP Exhibits at Springfield Sportsmans Show

From February 14th thru 17th Friends of the Eastern Panther mounted an important display at the Northeastern Sportsman Show on the grounds of the Eastern States Exposition in Springfield, MA. This show is the largest of its type in the northeast and annually attracts 100,000 people. Many of them with a sincere interest in wildlife and the environment. FOTEP's principal drawing card at this show was the Waasis videotape. FOTEP personnel played this videotape scores of times during the course of the show and well over one thousand people watched, including several who had seen and/or hunted mountain lions in the west. Also among the audience were teachers, biologists, tree farmers, hunters, fishermen, and outdoorsmen of many descriptions. Out of this large audience of knowledgeable people, not one person expressed doubt or skepticism about the identity of the animal in the film. Many people, however, expressed amazement and wonder at the fact that this elusive animal had in deed been photographed freely ranging in its natural habitat.

FOTEP also took advantage of opportunities to sell literature of various types and t-shirts in support of its activities. Important contacts were established, and new members were recruited. Felis concolor t-shirts were in strong demand, and, when sizes ran out, mail orders were taken. All in all, the Springfield show was a great success, and we feel that FOTEP personnel performed a very valuable public education service and at the same time raised hundreds of dollars.

FOTEP would like to thank Mr. Frank Sousa, Outdoors Editor for the Springfield Union-News and one of the owners of the show, for arranging for FOTEP's participation with no cost for display space. Frank, that was a generous action which we will not forget!

Jay's Track*

The Eastern Panther and the Burden of Proof

**Editors Note - We are extremely pleased (and fortunate) that this issue marks the introduction of a new feature column, "Jay's Track" by the well-known authority Jay Tischendorf, Director of the American Ecological Research Institute. Jay has extensive field experience with the Western Cougar to complement his formal training as a wildlife biologist. He has a life long interest in the eastern panther. Jay's column will be occasionally supplemented by "The Definition Den", which we hope will be helpful to many of our members as they continue to read about the eastern panther and other endangered species.*

The general scientific community continues clinging to the belief that cougars no longer exist in the northeast. When asked why, most biologists will cite the fact that in the decades since the reputed extirpation of the Eastern subspecies, Felis Concolor Couguar, no hard evidence of a bonafide wild puma, or panther, as the animal is properly known in the region, has been brought forth to prove the animal's continued existence.

On the contrary, it is my belief that hard evidence does exist if one is willing to make the time and effort to review it. Bruce Wright, for instance, spent 4 decades amassing reports, and photographs and casts of tracks, and even turned up 2 recent specimens of this elusive, long-tailed cat. Nonetheless, despite timely presentation of this information in both scientific and popular press, his findings inexplicably never gained widespread acceptance.

Having studied this material in depth it is apparent not all of it represents indisputable proof of the panther's existence. Still, there are more than a few convincing blocks of substantial evidence. This evidence extends not only all the way from the supposed extirpation of this cat right up to the point of Wright's untimely death in the late seventies, but also reaches from the Atlantic provinces down through the entire Appalachian chain.

That all this evidence is based on a combination of mistaken identity, escaped zoo animals, or released pets is an idea so far-fetched, and so nonscientific, that it defies comprehension. Yet this is exactly what many professional biologists and wildlife managers have been claiming for years.

History is replete with rediscoveries of animals believed extinct: the Eskimo curlew, the Bermuda petrel (thought extinct for 3 centuries), the coelacanth, the Tasmanian wolf, and the ivory-billed woodpecker, to mention a few. In our own eastern forests we need only look as far as the comeback of the white-tailed deer, black bear, bobcat, otter, fisher - and the arrival of the coyote - to see that many creatures are possessed of remarkable resilience to overharvest, habitat disruption, and even aggressive persecution and predator control.

Though it can be argued that this same history is just as full of true - and tragic - tales of extinction, the dodo, sea mink, Labrador duck, and heath hen for instance, it should be noted that in the case of the Eastern Panther, Felis Concolor has a distinct and wonderful advantage over most other animals on this earth. This edge, if you will, is none other than its environmental elasticity, the unique facet of its genetics and ecology that allows this secretive, tawny brown cat to range successfully over an astounding 100 degrees of latitude, all the way from the tip of South America to the Canadian Yukon. No other land mammal in the New World has a wider distribution or is more adaptable in its living requirements. Given this flexibility of habitat and food, the species' secretive, stealthy nature, it seems quite probable that the panther, reduced to a diet of small game, living commando-like in a few isolated strongholds, could well have survived the settlement of the Northeast.

This brings us to another related subject, that of a small, remnant band of pumas eking out a difficult existence in the cypress strands and swamps of south Florida. Endangered, recognized now as the state symbol, making their living in one of the most densely populated regions of the entire continent, if Florida panthers have managed to hang on in the face of unrelenting disturbance and development, the heavy hound hunting of the past, submarginal habitat and depauperate prey populations, it again seems reasonable to at least suspect, if not totally believe, that in some of the unsettled, undeveloped regions of the east - from the southern Appalachians northward - this elusive, low density species has maintained itself in small but viable numbers. Indeed, given the widespread increase in deer throughout the east, it is also reasonable to suspect that its numbers, likewise, may even be on the increase.

A final related point. Having in the west been exposed to control and sport hunting of mountain lions, and more directly to "hunting" them for research - tracking, capturing, marking, and releasing them - I can vouch for the fact that catching or killing only a few of these cats, let alone an entire population or cluster of populations, is an undertaking that requires not only a total commitment of time and energy, but a tremendous amount of expertise and luck as well. Based on this experience, it is difficult to believe that every last breeding panther was ever extripated in the east, for I doubt there have ever been enough people there with this rare combination of determination, reliable lion dogs, and luck with which to do it.

To conclude, faced with the insurmountable evidence gathered by individuals like Bruce Wright, and more recently Harold Hitchcock, Bob Downing, Virginia Fifield, and Ted Reed - as well as the arguments presented here - it seems now that the burden is upon science to indisputably prove the panther's extirpation rather than believers to prove its existence. For, in the words of the late David Cartwright, New Brunswick fur bearer biologist and a man who for years was himself a disbeliever, "We can no longer ignore the evidence."

Membership Benefits

Members Receive:

1. Subscription to the Newsletter.
2. Discounts on Special Programs.
3. Hot-Line Communications on significant developments.
4. Access to organizational data and expertise.

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Membership Card for one person.

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Membership Cards for two people at one address.

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$50.00 Sponsor
Receives personal listing in Annual Report in addition to Benefits shown above.

$100.00 Donor
Receives all Benefits shown above and receives a copy of "The Eastern Panther", "A Question of Survival" by Bruce S. Wright. This work is considered by many to be the most important book on the subject and is now out of print.

$250.00 Patron
Receives all Benefits shown above plus ten membership Cards for members of your choice.

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"Friends of The Eastern Panther"
P.O. Box 102
41 Front Street
Exeter, NH 03833
Phone: (603) 772-2178

Late Flashes

Utopia Game Refuge Spared (For Now)

In a last minute change of plans, New Brunswick Minister of Natural Resources and Energy, Morris Green, has reversed his earlier decision to dismantle the Utopia Game Refuge in Eastern Charlotte County. Utopia is in the heart of an area that has produced many documented sightings of the eastern panther over the last few decades. FOTEP has strongly opposed the dismantling of this refuge, as has the New Brunswick Wildlife Federation. FOTEP members have written both Premier McKenna and Minister Green, protesting the annihiliation of Utopia. A petition protesting the government's plans was signed by almost five hundred citizens and sent to Minister Green. All of these actions combined have been responsible for the government's change of heart. The saving of Utopia, along with the Plaster Rock and Canaan Game Refuges, is a clear example of the powerful role public opinion can play in shaping decisions which affect the environment. However, in this case, the reprieve is only for two years. We must be alert to further efforts to destroy these very important refuges and plan now to prevent future disaster.

Power Corridor Project Postponed by New Brunswick Power

We are very happy to report that NB Power has indefinitely postponed plans for a power corridor that was to stretch the length of Charlotte County where it was to be joined by another corridor stretching from the Bangor area. The two corridors were to join in the St. Croix Valley. The purpose of the two corridors was to provide a means of exporting electricity generated in New Brunswick into New England. The serious recession affecting New England has diminished demand for electricity, thus making the project economically unfeasable at the present time. The environmental effect of this power corridor, would, in our judgment, have been very serious, in both Charlotte County, NB, and Washington County, ME, two counties which are fundamental to the survival of the eastern panther.The proposed corridor, in its entirety, would dismantle about six square miles of habitat. But that is only the tip of the iceberg. Chemical herbicides would no doubt be continually used. Since the corridor would be 100 yards wide, it would offer a main highway for snowmobiles and other off-highway vehicles and the high voltage lines themselves are considered by many people to be a cause of cancer and other diseases. Evidence to support this view has been steadily mounting for several years. For an authoritative discussion of this matter read "Currents of Death," by Paul Brodeur, NYC, Simon & Schuster, 1989.

We must remain alert to the probability that this proposed power corridor will again come to life a few years from now. Although the project has been temporarily dropped by NB Power, Bangor Hydroelectric Co. is continuing the public process to secure certification for the Washington County section of the corridor. This is a sure sign that the project is not dead, only dormant.

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Winter 1992

FOTEP Field Team Prepares For Action

As we go to press, FOTEP's Field Project Team is well along with preparations for its expedition into the Fundy Wilderness area of southern New Brunswick. FOTEP members Larry and Ida Adair (Larry is President and Ida is Secretary of the Fundy Wilderness Coalition) have generously offered their cabin as a headquarters location for the team. The cabin is located close to the north central edge of the large area which will be searched. The cabin, which is used by the Adairs as a hunting lodge, has sleeping accommodations for all team members. From this cabin the various team members will disperse for both day trips and overnight excursions.

Team leader, Jay Tischendorf, has already organized a day by day schedule of events starting with a meeting of all American Team members at the home of Nancy and Ted Reed in Exeter, NH, on Monday, March 9. The team will spend the night with the Reeds and a small caravan will leave early the next morning for New Brunswick. Driving time from New Hampshire to the cabin is estimated at ten hours.

Members of the March 1992 FOTEP Field Team are as follows:

Jay Tischendorf, Team Captain, Ft. Collins, Colorado.

Harley Shaw, Chino Valley, Arizona.

Susan Morse, Jericho, Vermont.

Craig Govan, Valencia, Pennsylvania.

Steve Gross, Jericho, Vermont.

Rob Rainer, Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Larry Adair, Sussex, New Brunswick.

Ted Reed, Exeter, New Hampshire.

Assisting the team with their crucial knowledge of local conditions will be FOTEP members Larry and Ida Adair, and Dr. Stephen Justason, all members of the Fundy Wilderness Coalition and longtime residents of Sussex, NB.

The team captain's plan calls for an early-on two hour reconaissance flight over the area of search and also meetings with personnel from the New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and Rangers based at Fundy National Park. Following these orientation initiatives, the actual search for panther sign will begin. Jay has invited Bruce Johnson, Chairman of the Canadian Federal Eastern Courgar Recovery Team to spend an evening with the FOTEP team in order to review progress and make suggestions. Mr. Johnson is a highly thought of Wildlife Biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service in Sackville, NB, and is well known in Canada for his work with endangered species such as the Peregrine Falcon.

At about the mid-point of the project, the team will be joined by a professional Wildlife Photographer who will accompany team members for three days. This man, Brian Atkinson, will operate as a free-lance, and is not a member of the team.

Shortly after Brian Atkinson departs, all team members will take part in a brain-storming session to

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ISC Activities

In our Spring, 1991 issue of "Panther Prints" we highlighted the International Society of Cryptozoology and described the interests and activities of this uniquely valuable group.

The ISC will hold its 11th annual meeting on Saturday, May 23rd, 1992 in cooperation with the division of Biology and Medicine, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

Jay Tischendorf and Ted Reed have been invited by ISC to attend this meeting. Although no final plans have been made, it is quite probable that Jay and/or Ted will make a presentation updating the evidence surrounding the survival and viability of the Eastern Panther, Felis Concolor, Cougar, Kerr.

FOTEP Field Team Prepares *(continued from page 1)*

be chaired by Jay. The purpose of this session is to critique the entire operation up to that point, and to measure where the team is — scientifically, professionally, and financially. It is hoped that out of this meeting will come constructive suggestions to enhance the final period of the search.

After FOTEP Field Project '92 has officially ended late in March, the team has been invited to meet with Mrs. Bruce Wright, Honorary President of FOTEP, at her home in Fredericton. This will give Mrs. Wright the opportunity to greet personally all members of the team, and the team will be able to hear from Mrs. Wright some of the adventures she shared with her husband in the decades when they were assembling evidence in support of the Eastern Panther's survival. Mrs. Wright has already expressed how pleased she is that the FOTEP team is endeavoring to carry on the work in which her husband served as a lonely pioneer over a period of more than three decades.

After the meeting with Mrs. Wright, the team will wind up its official schedule with a roundtable meeting in Fredericton. Attending this meeting will be representatives from many agencies, private, provincial and federal. The purpose of the meeting is to communicate the findings and recommendations of the FOTEP team to a broad spectrum of interested parties. If, indeed, as we believe, the Eastern Panther does exist as a viable population in New Brunswick and other places in the northeast, then the appropriate private and public entities alike, have a very serious responsibility to make sure that all necessary steps are taken to insure the survival and well-being of that population.

Following the Fredericton roundtable, FOTEP team members will travel to St. Andrews and will spend the night at Nancy and Ted Reed's home in that town. The next morning team members will depart for their various destinations, having brought to a close FOTEP Field Project '92.

Jay's Track*

Analyzing the Waasis Video

**Editors Note - FOTEP Member Jay Tischendorf, who is Director of the American Ecological Research Institute, is a Technical Advisor to FOTEP.*

The rebirth of the seasons could be felt that warm spring day in 1990 when Roger and Donna Noble, on their farm in rural New Brunswick, captured an Eastern Panther on videotape for the first time ever. Since that memorable May afternoon outside the quaint farming village of Waasis — where the Nobles were known more for their fine woodworking and furniture craft than anything else — this videotape has been viewed by thousands of people throughout Canada and the United States.

Scrutinized, criticized, applauded, and analyzed, the video today remains as controversial as it was the day the Nobles went public and presented it to the New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and Energy (NBDNRE) for identification. The reason for the controversy? The animal's ambiguous but apparently small stature. Clearly the animal is not the 6 to 8 foot panther many expect to see.

Though this is true, several facts nonetheless do stand clear. One, that the Nobles realized the tawny brown creature making its way along the forest border of their field that day was something extraordinary, and two, that they had the miraculous presence of mind to document it on film. They are remarkable people.

Thanks to NBDNRE Biologists Gary Moore and the late David Cartwright, coordinating an effort of monumental proportions, the Waasis video has subsequently been studied by such authorities as Don McAlpine of the New Brunswick Museum, several panther researchers with the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

Interestingly it is the police, specifically the renowned RCMP crime laboratory in Ottawa — working in cooperation with Moore — who have made the most thorough and objective study of the film to date. Using the advanced and somewhat secretive crime-solving techniques of film superimposition, geometry, calculus, shadow analysis, and on-site measurements of trees and other features identifiable in the original video, the RCMP arrived at a standing body length estimate for the Waasis cat of 21-26" plus or minus 15%.

This estimate, derived from the point in the film where Roger and his camera were nearly perpendicular to the walking cat, is for body and head length only; it does not include the tail. Keep this in mind as we work through a few calculations of our own to get a better idea of just how big — or small — this cat actually was.

First of all, let's convert the rather large figure of "plus or minus 15%" into something easier to understand. On the low side of the RCMP estimate we have 21". Now, 15% of 21 = 3, so if we subtract 3 from 21" we are left with a minimum body length of 18". Conversely, 15% of 26 is 4. If we add 4 to 26" we obtain a maximum length of 30" (Figure 1).

Now, what about the tail? Those of you who have seen the video will recall that the cat's tail is 1/2 to 2/3 the length of its body (again, this includes the head as well). Keeping to the low side, let's assume the tail was only half as long as the rest of the cat. Half in this case would be 18 x 1/2, or 9". Adding this to the minimum possible body size of 18" we get 27". On the other hand, if we assume the tail was 2/3 as long as the body — which actually is closer to the truth — and use the maximum body length figure of 30", our calculation looks like this: (30 x 2/3) + 30" = 50".

Take a moment and visualize what our calculations to this point have given us, a cat, walking, ranging in size from 27 to 50" — but only when its tail is sticking straight out. Kind of hard to visualize, huh? Yeah, I thought so too. Have a look at Figure 2, or try holding a yardstick out in front of you to get a better idea of how long 27 to 50" actually is. You ought to get the idea at this point that we are dealing with either a large house cat or a small to medium-small cougar.

In truth, the animal was probably somewhere between these two extremes. If we average 27 and 50 by adding them together and dividing by 2, we get a median length of 38.5", probably the best size guess so far. Remember, though, this is an imaginary cat that not only is standing, but holding its tail in our idealized, atypical, fully extended position as well.

All these numbers, all these calculations, high side, low side, if, and, and but — by now you're probably wondering if we'll ever get a number that really means something. Bear with me a little longer and I think you will be satisfied.

If we were to lay the Waasis cat down and stretch it completely out, we'd find its total length — measured on a straight line from the tip of its nose to the tip of its tail — would actually be 1/4 to 1/2 again as long as it appeared while walking. Since this assumes a walking cat with a naturally drooping tail, and since our calculations have to this point been geared toward a hypothetical cat with a fully outstretched tail, we need to revamp our numbers slightly.

Let's use our original minimum and maximum body length values (18 and 30) and add on a tail that, drooping, is only 1/3 the length — measured on a straight line across the droop — of the cat's body. That this is a conservative approach is clearly shown in Figure 3, where the tail, at 1/3 the length of the body in its naturally drooping position, definitely appears shorter than it actually was. Half would probably be a better conversion, depicted by the solid vertical line in Figure 3, but for the sake of argument we will go ahead and use the smaller value. The 2 standing, full length calculations, similar to those done earlier, are thus (18 x 1/3) + 18 = 24", and (30 x 1/3) + 30 = 40".

Using these values for our now stretched out cat (remember, it will be 1/4 to 1/2 times longer stretched) we get a low end total length of (24 x 1/4) + 24 = 30", and a high end value of (40 x 1/2) + 40 = 60". The median length is 45". Interestingly, the lengths of several 35 to 40 lb. 4 to 7 month old cougar kittens I measured out west fall between 45 and 60". Figure 2, showing the extended tail, is a fairly accurate portrayal of a cat in this measurement position, except it would be lying down, relaxed, and its neck outstretched.

Unfortunately, I do not have much data on house cat lengths, so there is little I can say regarding the sizes they might attain. Certainly 30" is within the realm of possibility. Remember, however, this value was arrived at by faily conservative means and though probably at the high end of believability for a domestic cat it represents the absolute minimum size of the Waasis animal.

Input from readers with pet cats allowing themselves to be measured in a comfortable — not excessively — stretched position would be very useful here, and I urge our friends to get in touch. Be specific regarding how and what you measured. In terms of weight, Guinness (1980) lists a world record house cat of 42 lbs., though the accompanying photograph shows it to be so monstrously obese that it is hardly even identifiable as a felid.

So, what do I think of the famous Waasis video? Two sequences stand out in my mind. The first is early in the film, when the impressive muscularity of the cat's shoulders, rippling through its taut and tawny coat, is very distinct. I've never seen a house cat with a build like that.

The other notable sequence is the very last, when the cat, nearly hidden by forest shadows, makes a magnificent upward leap into or past a nearby tree. Exemplifying the animal's incredibly lithe and fluid grace, conveying at the same time a marked sense of heft, the scene, though exceeding brief, literally shouts "Mountain Lion!"

Beyond that there is the animal's sleek and glowing coat, its color, that wonderfully unique and wild shade of summer whitetails offset — just as in the deer — by an underside creamy as Christmas nog. This is textbook cougar, folks.

A reenactment video made by Moore and his colleagues using the original camera in its original positions and featuring the Noble's own chocolate Labrador Retriever may help convince the most die-hard skeptics. This short-haired, 40 to 45 lb. dog, walking along the same forest border as did its feline counterpart, compares very favorable in length and height to the mystery cat.

Jay's Track *(continued from page 2)*

Additionally, Gary Moore has since borrowed one of the few remaining specimens of the Eastern Panther — this one full mount of a stocky adult in possession of the New Brunswick Museum — placed it where the original cat was, and videotaped it from several angles. Not surprisingly, at the distances from which the Nobles were filming, it, according to him, closely resembled the Waasis cat.

It has been my belief all along that the Waasis cat was indeed a young wild-borne panther that had only recently lost its spots. This puts it roughly in the 6 to 10 month range. The cat's apparently calm behavior is not surprising, for Donna and Roger were neither threatening nor aggressive, the safety of the forest was a mere bound away, and there is good reason to suspect that the young cat had never even seen a person before. That it had ventured onto the Nobles' farm at all merely suggests to me feline inquisitiveness or normal wandering. Where the cat's mother was, or whether it was an orphan, is anybody's guess.

Knowing that a full grown panther would leave few, if any, doubters in its tawny wake, many viewers have expressed dismay at the diminutive size of this cat. Ted Reed, however, makes the persuasive argument that this young panther is actually the best sighting we could hope for because it lends great support to the belief that panthers are not only present but breeding in those central New Brunswick forests. And what do you think?

Until next time . . . 'nuff said. Any questions?

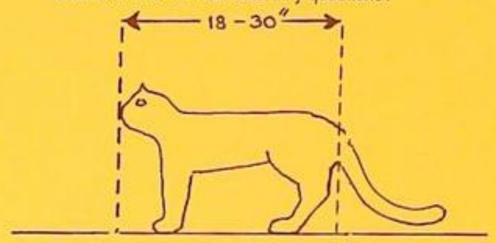

Figure 1.

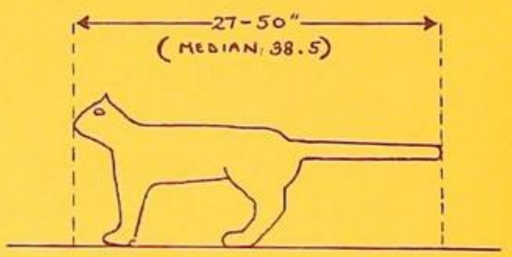

Figure 2.

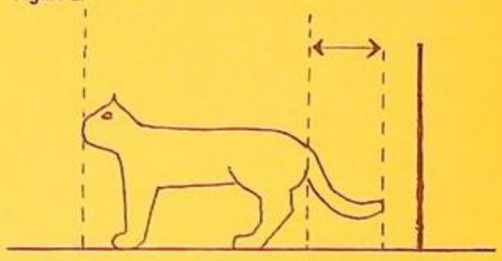

Figure 3. Showing the tail, measured across its droop on a straight line parallel to the spine, if it were 1/3 the length of the cat's body. This is a conservative estimate.

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"Friends of The Eastern Panther"
P.O. Box 102
41 Front Street
Exeter, NH 03833
Phone: (603) 772-2178

The Definition Den

Some Important Definitions:

Carnivore: Any flesh-eating or predatory organism, or more properly, any member of the taxonomic order Carnivora, a group of flesh-eating mammals which includes felids, canids, ursids (bears), mustelids (weasels), and procyonids (raccoons).

Predator: An organism that survives by preying on others.

Herbivore: An organism that feeds mainly on plants and other herbaceous matter.

Omnivore: An organism, such as man or the black bear, that eats both vegetable and animal matter.

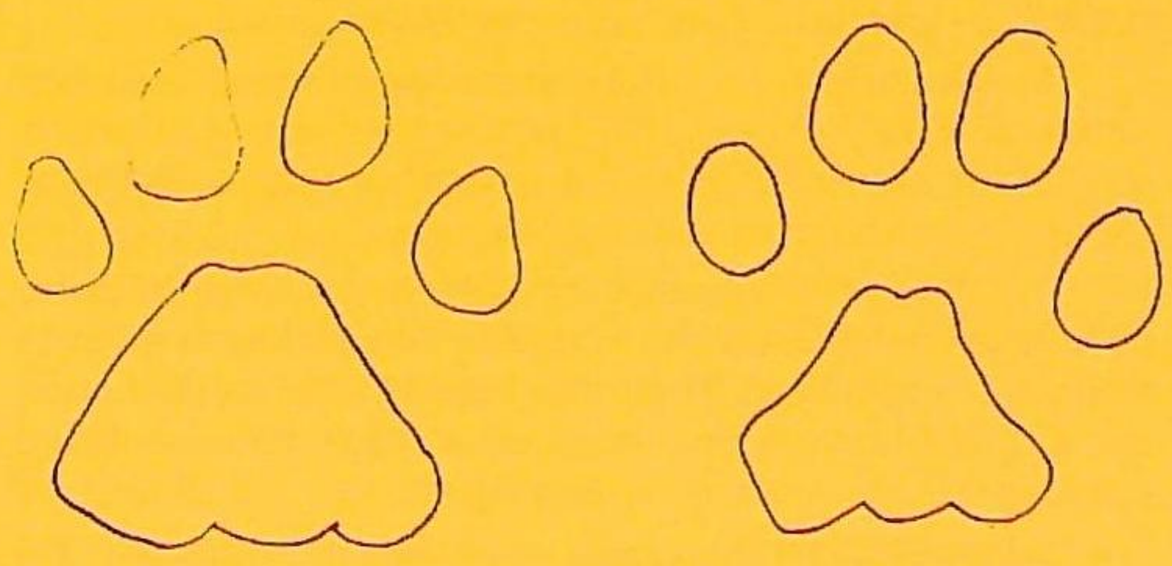
Ungulate: Hooved mammals, wild or domestic.

Ecosystem: The complex of a community and its environment functioning as an ecological unit in nature.

Ecotone: A transition area between two adjacent ecological communities exhibiting competition between organisms common to both.

Though Felis Concolor will sometimes kill and eat other carnivores, the bulk of its diet consists of herbivores, specifically ungulates.

PANTHER TRACKS: In general, 3 to 5" long x 3 to 5" wide, if relatively fresh.



Panther Prints

The Official Newsletter of The Friends of The Eastern Panther

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Volume 1 No. 3 Summer — Fall 1991

Important Sightings Continue in the Northeast

The first nine months of 1991 have produced a number of encounters with Eastern Panthers in the general region extending from northern Nova Scotia to western Massachusetts. From the numerous reports submitted to FOTEP we have chosen three which we believe to be both convincing and important. These reports are presented in chronological order and no conclusion should be drawn as to the relative importance of each from the order of presentation.

The Conway Panther(s)

On February 10, 1991, at about 3:00 p.m., Lawrence and Jane Recore of Conway, Franklin County, Mass, were burning brush near their meadow on Roaring Brook Road. Lawrence left the area and upon his return a short time later Jane brought to his attention that a large cat was sitting down in the hay meadow watching the brush fire burn. After a little while the cat got up and walked the length of the hay meadow. Jane had watched the animal for about ten minutes prior to Lawrence's return. After her husband's return the couple watched the animal together for another ten minutes before it disappeared into the woods. At the time of the sighting the day was sunny with a light wind. Temperature was 30ºF. During the time of observation, the Recores were about 85 yards away from the animal. They describe the animal as reddish gray in color with whitish belly. They estimate the length of the tail as 32". They describe the head as round and with a diameter of 8" to 10". They describe the ears as pointed but rounded. They estimate a shoulder height of 24" and a weight of 90 to 100 lbs. When it is considered that Lawrence Recore watched the animal for ten minutes and that Jane watched it for twenty minutes under ideal weather conditions, it is difficult to conclude that the description of the animal given above is other than quite accurate. This conclusion is further strengthened by the fact that the Recores were on their own property where they were thoroughly familiar with their surroundings - an important fact when estimating distances and even size and weight where estimates depend to some degree on comparison with other objects. In talking with Mr. Recore he advised us that he had hunted mountain lions in the west and that there was absolutely no doubt in his mind that he and Jane had been watching an eastern mountain lion. As a point of further interest, less than three months before the Recore sighting another sighting was reported to FOTEP from Conway. This sighting occurred on Nov. 15, 1990. At 6:45 a.m. Alan Parker of Conway spotted a large cat in a small pasture between Fields Hill Road and Whately Road in Conway. Mr. Parker watched this animal for about five minutes. During this period at one point the animal stood broadside staring. It also sat down. Later it crossed under two fences. But upon examination no hair could be found. During the period of observation Mr. Parker was 50-75 yards distant from the animal. He described the animal as weighing 150-175 lbs., and creamy tan in color. Length of tail approx. 30" and shoulder height 24"-30". He was emphatic in describing the animal as appearing to be in perfect health with a shining coat.

"Cat stood watching myself and my three horses - plus my pick-up was running with hi-beam lights on for safety on dirt road. It slowly walked downhill, under a fence - across tar road - turned - sat down on haunches - stared again - stood up - walked into thick woods and was gone from sight."

It would appear from the description that this was not the same panther seen by the Recores. However, here again, the weather conditions were ideal (clear and calm), the observer was in his home territory, and the five minute period of observation was ample to allow an accurate description of the animal. There is little, if any, doubt that Alan Parker did indeed see an Eastern Panther in its natural habitat.

(continued on page 2)

The Quabbin Panther

On May 18, 1991 David Ludlow, an employee of the Mass Audubon Society's South Shore Regional Center in Marshfield, Mass had an encounter with an Eastern Panther in the northeastern area of the Quabbin Reservoir Reservation not far from the town of Petersham, Mass. David wrote a comprehensive account of this encounter before he consulted any authorities or looked at any books describing mammals. FOTEP is strongly impressed with David's account and we have his permission to reproduce this account word for word for the benefit of our members. We believe it is very difficult to read this account and fail to be convinced that David saw an Eastern Panther.

Report on Mountain Lion Sighting

Nancy Phinney and I (David Ludlow) were covering the Quabbin Reservation area for the Mass. Audubon Society's Birdathon. Just before noon we ran into Dave Small who was leading a bird trip for the Athol Bird and Nature Club. He told us about an olive-sided flycatcher in the field next to the beaver pond at the end of Gate 36. We parked our van in the parking lot at the end of State Forest Road, which cuts through the Federated Womens Clubs State Forest. We rode our bikes through the picnic area and over the hill to the beaver pond and the flycatcher. Since the trail over the hill was very wet and rough, we decided that riding out Gate 35 to Rte 122 and down State Forest Road would be easier. When we got to Rte 122 Nancy decided to rest while I rode ahead to get the van to pick her up.

(5/18/91) The day was bright with blue sky and a few puffy, white clouds. There were light breezes and it was about 70 degrees. At about 1:45 pm I was about halfway down State Forest Road, biking downhill at around 20 mph through an S turn. I was coming around a righthand turn with the road turning left in front of me. Just before the apex of the lefthand turn in the middle of the left side of the road less than 100 feet away was a large cat. It was facing left in full body profile.

My first impression of size was that it was the size of an eastern coyote (I live at Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary and have coyote living on the property). But the cat was longer bodied and was in a crouched position so I did not see it at its full standing height. The color was medium brown. The animal seemed to be a light brown underneath with a light frosting of dark brown, as if the hairs were light at the base and dark at the tips. The tips of its ears and tail were darker.

The tail was about the length of half of the rest of the animal and about 2½" in diameter throughout its length. The tail curved downward from the base then swept upward at the tip to a height just below the line of the back.

The cat turned its head to face me for a moment, but I didn't remember much detail of the face other than the catlike shape and structure of its head and the aforementioned dark ear tips.

The body parts that really caught my eye were the paws and legs. The paws were as big as a loosely closed fist about 5" to 6" across. The legs were very muscular and as big as my arm (I'm 5' 11" at 150 lbs. for idea on arm size). I could really see the strength and power of the animal. When I came around the corner the cat was already in a crouched position or it was slinking across the road. It turned briefly to see me then bolted into the woods very quickly. I didn't think it leaped into the woods in one leap but more likely a short fast run. When it moved, its body stayed low with the line of its back staying fairly level and its shoulders above its back with each stride.

I stopped my bike (somewhat in shock at what I had just seen) to see if I could see it moving off through the woods. Since the woods were fairly open I could see in 75' to 100' from the road. I did not see it nor could I hear the sound of it moving away. I was surprised that an animal of that size could move away or disappear so quickly. I checked the side of the road for tracks. But the ground was very hard-packed and could not find any. I didn't go into the woods to look for tracks (shock factor?), I should have.

After that I continued on to our van and then picked up Nancy.

I've worked for Mass. Audubon Society for four years doing property maintenance and leading bird and nature walks. I've been observing all aspects of nature my whole life. I've been obsessed with birding since 1984. For several years I've been contributing to the bird sighting reports published in bird observer of eastern Mass and to American birds. I've gone birding many places in the United States, as well as Central America and Africa.

In Kenya in East Africa I have seen (African) lion. The cat I saw at Quabbin was smaller but structurally similar to a female lion.

I've tried to think of any other possible animal this could have been and have eliminated all of them, including dogs, coyote, deer, housecats, and bob cat.

In my opinion the cat I saw was a mountain lion!

The above report was written from memory of observation. I have not looked at a field guide of mammals or let anyone describe any of the large cats to me.

Now, after looking at the Peterson Field Guide to Mammals, I feel that my description of the cat fits mountain lion. The body size and tail proportion I gave are close to the measurements in the book.

I said the tips of the ears were dark; the book said the backs of the ears were dark. The book describes the color as tawny to grayish. The animal's coat which I described as frosted with dark brown may have been

FOTEP Becomes a Founding Member of the Fundy Wilderness Coalition

Alarmed by the New Brunswick Government's aggressive promotion of plans for the Fundy Trail Highway proposed to run through the wilderness area lying between Fundy National Park and the town of St. Martin's, representatives of a group of organizations interested in the future of this large area met in Sussex, N.B. on August 24th. Out of this meeting came the birth of an umbrella organization called the "Fundy Wilderness Coalition." This new organization voted to oppose the construction of the Fundy Trail and to support a "state-of-the-art" hiking trail to be constructed along the coastline. A hiking trail would enable people to enjoy a wilderness experience and at the same time not open up this spectacular area to vehicles and attendant exploitations. FOTEP is deeply concerned with this area, because it believes the area is one of the last and perhaps the greatest stronghold remaining for the Eastern Panther. In the early '70's Bruce Wright wrote the following words:

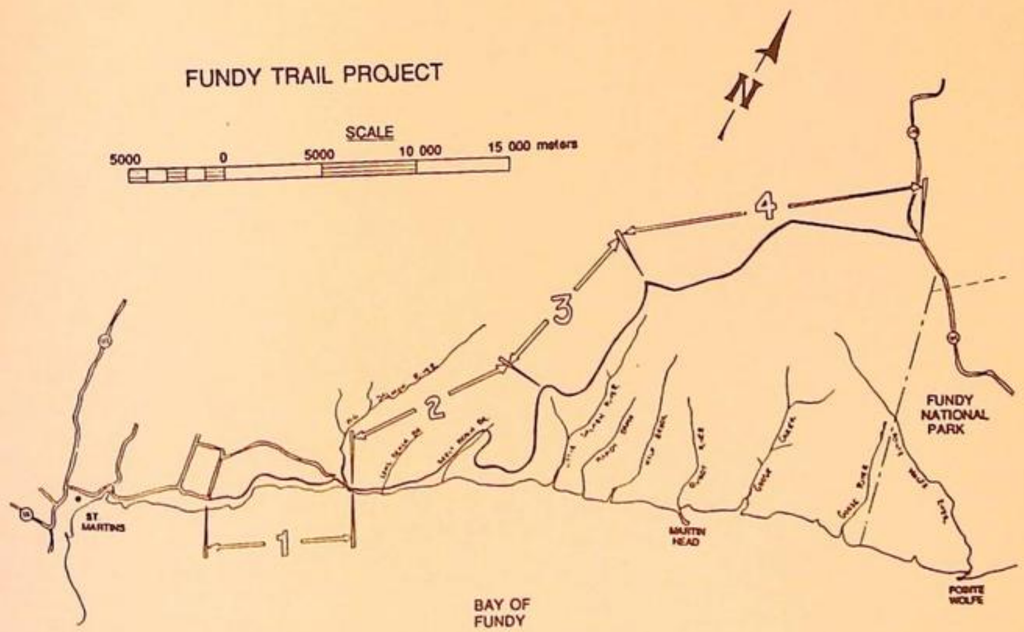
"The construction of a major highway along the shores of the Bay of Fundy, followed by the permanent opening up of the region, is an imminent probability. This would result in the destruction of a specific Eastern Panther range, and also, in time, in the disappearance of the species in this area."

Although the Fundy Trail never was built in Wright's lifetime, it has now reappeared in the early '90's as a much more serious threat not only to the Eastern Panther but also to all who recognize this unspoiled coastline as a crown jewel, unique among Atlantic coastline natural resources. See map below.

If you wish to help in the fight to save the Fundy Wilderness Area, write or phone:

Mr. Larry Adair, President
Fundy Wilderness Coalition
Sussex, R.R. 4
Sussex, N.B. Canada EOE 1PO
(506) 433-5566

Proposed Fundy Trail Project in Southeastern New Brunswick



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The Definition Den

Some Important Definitions:

Endangered: A species or subspecies whose prospects of reproduction and survival is in immediate jeopardy due to such factors as habitat loss, overharvest, exploitation, or disease. In short, an animal for whom the long-term prognosis is bleak.

The eastern panther: A subspecies of the puma, cougar, or mountain lion, Felis Concolor, is listed as endangered by the federal governments of Canada and the United States, as well as most eastern states and provinces.

Threatened: A species or subspecies which, although not in immediate danger of extinction, is in such small and/or unstable numbers that it may become endangered if its situation deteriorates. In short, an animal for whom the prognosis is poor.The federal government classifies the gray wolf (Canis Lupis) in Minnesota as threatened.

Species of Special Concern: These are animals, such as the lynx and pine marten, whose status is carefully being monitored for signs of deterioration toward one of the above categories.

Extinct: A term of finality most properly used to denote a species which, for any number of reasons, no longer exists.The great auk is extinct, as is the passenger pigeon. The California condor is extinct in the wild; a few individuals survive in captivity.

Extirpated: A species, subspecies, or population which is extinct locally, but which continues to survive in other parts of its range.The grizzly bear (a subspecies of the brown bear) and gray wolf (a species) have been extirpated from much of their former range, though healthy populations continue to exist in Alaska and Canada.

Acknowledgment

We wish to thank **Mr. Frank O'Leary**, FOTEP member, of Conway, Mass. for his work in making sure that we knew about the Conway Panthers. Mr. O'Leary not only talked with Lawrence and Jane Recore and also with Alan Parker, but made sure that written reports of both incidents were provided.

Also we thank **Mrs. Richard Arms** of Gilmanton, NH, FOTEP member, for sending us the clipping from the *Boston Globe* which carried the initial report of David Ludlow's Quabbin sighting.

Ms. Martha McKenna of Madison, NH, phoned us to report the sighting of the Madison Panther by William F. Jones, and we wish to thank her for doing so.